Published: June 19, 2016, *Kokomo Tribune* [Page: A4]

http://www.kokomotribune.com/opinion/editorial-why-do-civilians-need-an-ar/article_3b7b70ee-35ae-11e6-b044-23063310b1f6.html

Editorial: Why do civilians need an AR-15?

In 1949, the Soviet Armed Forces put a new, deadly assault rifle into general use, the AK-47. The Mikhail Kalashnikov design was soon disseminated around the world as a cheap, effective, durable military and police weapon. America's answer came less than 10 years later in the form a modification of the AR-10, a selective fire rifle first developed by Gosport native Eugene Stoner and two of his assistants at ArmaLite. A re-designed AR-10 was soon marketed to the military by Colt as the M-16, and was sold to the public as the AR-15. Stoner died in 1997, during the 10-year period starting in 1994 when new AR-15s with certain features were outlawed for civilian use under the Federal Assault Weapons Ban. So, he wasn't around to see the ban's lifting in 2004. Since then, AR-15-style rifles have been a common denominator in several high-profile mass shootings including:

• The July 20, 2012 shooting in an Aurora, Colorado movie theater, which left 12 dead and 70 injured.

• The Dec. 14, 2012 shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, which left 28 dead and two injured.

• The Dec. 2, 2015 shooting in San Bernardino, California, which left 16 dead and 24 injured.

• And now, the June 12, 2016 shooting at Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida, which left 50 dead and 53 injured.

In the wake of this latest massacre, Stoner’s family spoke out for the first time.

"Our father, Eugene Stoner, designed the AR-15 and subsequent M-16 as a military weapon to give our soldiers an advantage over the AK-47," the Stoner family told NBC News late Wednesday. "He died long before any mass shootings occurred. But, we do think he would have been horrified and sickened as anyone, if not more, by these events."

There is no reasonable civilian purpose for this type of weapon. Unlike handguns, they offer no reliable accuracy at close range for home protection purposes. And, unlike bolt-action rifles and shotguns, require little to no skill in the hunting realm. This is a gun designed to kill as many people as possible as quickly as possible. Period.

The sad truth is that re-banning the AR-15 and the like won’t even begin to address the most prevalent weapon used in mass shootings: legally obtained handguns. That’s a much thornier issue. But, if we can’t even call the AR-15-style rifle a step too far, how do we imagine we’ll ever be able to address the larger gun problem in this country?